

Message Text

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ACTION INR-07

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 ISO-00 CIAE-00 NSAE-00 /015 W
-----041004Z 049252 /20

P 040900Z APR 77
FM USLO PEKING
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7519
INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
CINCPAC FOR POLAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L PEKING 634

NOFORN

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, CH
SUBJECT: PEKING ATMOSPHERICS

REFS: (A) PEKING 532 (B) PEKING 615 (C) STATE 73784

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. TENG HSIAO-PING'S RETURN HAS BEEN PUT OFF INTO THE SUMMER BY ANOTHER CHINESE OFFICLA, ONE WHO HAD EARLIER ASSURED A FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT THAT TENG WOULD BE BACK BY APRIL 7. MEANWHILE, EVERY OUTWARD SIGN INDICATES AN UNEVENTFUL CELEBRATION OF THE CHING-MING FESTIVAL. END SUMMARY.

2. ANOTHER CHINESE OFFICIAL (REF B) HAS RETRACTED HIS EARLIER STATEMENT THAT TENG HSIAO-PING WOULD RETURN BY APRIL 7, THE ANNIVERSARY OF HIS DISMISSAL FROM ALL PARTY POSTS. WE HAVE IT SECONDHAND BUT RELIABLY THAT YUGOSLAV CORRESPONDENT RANCIC--STRICTLY PROTECT--ACOSTED AT A DIPLOMATIC RECEPTION HELD ON APRIL 4 THE SOURCE OF HIS STORY (REF A) THAT TENG WOULD RETURN BY APRIL 7; RANCIC INDICATED THAT HE FELT "USED" BY
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THE SOURCE, PROBABLY FOR INTERNAL POLITICAL ENDS THAT HE COULD ONLY DIMLY FATHOM. HIS SOURCE--EITHER MA YU-CHEN OR ANOTHER FUNCTIONARY OF THE MFA INFORMATION DEPARTMENT--RESPONDED IN CHAGRIN THAT HIS EARLIER STATEMENT HAD BEEN "TRUE AT THE TIME"; ON THAT HE "GAVE HIS WORD." BUT UNEXPLAINED "OTHER EVENTS" HAD INTERVENED. PRESSED TO SAY WHEN--AND

IF--TENG WOULD RETURN, THE SOURCE RESPONDED VAGUELY THAT TENG "MIGHT" BE BACK AFTER JULY. HE DID NOT ELABORATE.

3. MEANWHILE, EVERY OUTWARD SIGN INDICATES AN UN-EVENTFUL CELEBRATION AND PASSING OF THE CHING-MING FESTIVAL (REF C). PRESUMABLY THE WORD HAS BEEN PASSED THROUGH THE USUAL BRIEFINGS THAT NO MANIFESTATION OF PRO-TENG SENTIMENT WILL BE TOLERATED. WE ARE AWARE OF NO POSTERS DISPLAYED IN PEKING; WE HAVE HEARD THAT SOME WREATHS ARE BEING PREPARED AT PEKING UNIVERSITY BUT SUSPECT THEY MAY BE DESTINED FOR WITHIN-UNIT OBSERVANCES RATHER THAN PUBLIC DISPLAY AT TIENANMEN OR ELSEWHERE; AND WE HAVE HEARD SEVERAL--UNCONFIRMABLE--RUMORS THAT NEW MILITARY UNITS HAVE MOVED INTO THE PEKING AREA. STREET SECURITY, PARTICULARLY IN THE TIENANMEN AREA, SEEMS SLIGHTLY ENHANCED.

4. IT IS INDICATIVE OF THE PECULIAR AND RATHER ARTIFICIAL ATMOSPHERE PREVAILING IN PEKING THAT THE NATIONAL MEDIA FRONTPAGED NEWS OF THE COMPLETION AHEAD OF SCHEDULE OF THE "BASIC EDIFICE" OF THE MAO MAUSOLEUM--NOT THE STRUCTURE ITSELF. CONSTRUCTION CONTINUES APACE, BOTH DAY AND NIGHT, AIMED AT COMPLETION--ACCORDING TO THE RUMOR MILL--BY EITHER PARTY DAY (JULY 1), ARMY DAY AUGUST 1, OR THE ANNIVERSARY OF MAO'S DEATH (SEPTEMBER 9). THE FENCE AROUND THE WORKSITE STILL STANDS, A
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POSSIBLE MAGNET FOR THE POSTER WRITERS OF LAST JANUARY. BUT THE MARTYR'S MONUMENT, FOCAL POINT OF LAST YEAR'S TIENANMEN DEMONSTRATIONS, IS ENCLOSED BEHIND THE FENCE.

5. AS USLO EARLIER REPORTED, THE PEKING AIRPORT IS CLOSED TO INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC FLIGHTS DURING DAYLIGHT HOURS FROM MARCH 31 TO APRIL 10, OSTENSIBLY TO PERMIT REPAIR UNDER OPTIMAL TEMPERATURE CONDITIONS OF "CRACKS IN THE RUNWAY." SUCH REPAIRS ARE GOING ON; ACCESS TO THE AIRPORT ITSELF IS PERMITTED DURING DAYTIME WITHOUT RESTRICTION TO FOREIGNERS MAKING POUCH PICKUPS AND DELIVERIES; THERE IS NO OBSERVABLE INCREASE IN AIRPORT SECURITY; AND INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS, MOST OF WHICH ARE SCHEDULED FOR ARRIVAL AFTER SUNSET IN ANY EVENT, HAVE CONTINUED WITHOUT INCIDENT. DESPITE WIDESPREAD SKEPTICISM IN PEKING'S FOREIGN COMMUNITY OVER TIMING AND LAST-MINUTE NOTIFICATION OF THE REPAIRS, WE HAVE HEARD NO CREDIBLE RATIONALE SAVE

THE OFFICIAL ONE FOR DAYTIME CLOSING OF THE AIRPORT.

6. WE HAVE SEEN NO OUTWARD INDICATION OF TOP-LEVEL OR OTHER IMPORTANT MEETINGS APART FROM THOSE THE NEW CHINA NEWS AGENCY HAS LATER PUBLICIZED.

7. FOR THE PAST SEVERAL DAYS, SMALL PROCESSIONS OF SCHOOL CHILDREN, BEATING DRUMS AND BANGING CYMBALS, HAVE MARCHED THROUGH THE DIPLOMATIC COMPOUND AREA ONCE OR TWICE DAILY. WE PRESUME THIS ACTIVITY IS ASSOCIATED WITH THE ONGOING CAMPAIGN TO SEND AS MANY ABLE BODIES AS POSSIBLE TO DROUGHT AREAS.

8. COMMENT: TENG'S RETURN AND PRO-TENG DEMONSTRATIONS IN PEKING APPEAR EQUALLY IMPROBABLE AT THIS JUNCTURE. BUT THERE IS A CERTAIN UNEASINESS IN THE AIR. THAT IT DERIVES FROM CONTENTION--AND SOME CONFIDENTIAL

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CONFUSION AND NERVOSENESS--WITHIN THE LEADERSHIP IS SUGGESTED BY THE SEMI-OFFICAL STATEMENTS AND RETRATIONS ON TENG'S FATE; THE APPARENTLY DELIVERATE LEAKS TO FOREIGNERS COUPLED WITH A PEOPLE'S DAILY LETTER TO THE EDITOR INVEIGHING AGAINST LEAKS; THE SLIGHTLY ENHANCED STREET SECURITY; THE RUMORS OF A MILITARY ALERT OR MILITARY MOVEMENTS; LONG LEADERSHIP ABSENCES FROM PUBLIC SIGHT PUNCTUATED BY EPPEARANCES WITH LESSER-RANKING FOREIGNERS (HUA'S MEETING APRIL 3 WITH THE VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE WEST GERMAN CDU IS A CASE IN POINT); AND THE PRINTING OF ALLEGORICAL ATTACKS ON A "NEW OPPOSITION" IN THE OFFICIAL MEDIA.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS, POLITICAL SUMMARIES, POLITICAL LEADERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 04-Apr-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977PEKING00634
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770116-0397
Format: TEL
From: PEKING
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770491/aaaadbeh.tel
Line Count: 153
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 7b7179aa-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION INR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: NOFORN
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: NOFORN
Reference: 77 PEKING 532, 77 PEKING 615, 77 STATE 73784
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29-Dec-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2907277
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PEKING ATMOSPHERICS
TAGS: PINT, CH, (TENG HSIAO-PING)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/7b7179aa-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009